

Nuisance Animal Management Guidelines



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation
Department of Environment and Natural Resources

NUISANCE ANIMAL MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

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1.0 DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Wildlife belong in the wild, and as urban development on the landscapes surrounding our state parks increases, the importance of our state parks system as a refuge for wild animals also increases. As the amount of wildlife habitat shrinks, many species are displaced and forced to adapt to life in less than ideal environments. Others may migrate to nearby refuges, like state parks, that still support adequate natural habitat. The importance of our parks as wildlife refuges in an increasingly urban landscape makes it even more important that our field staff endeavor to minimize human threats to native species.

The presence of a wide array of wild animals and the opportunity to observe them are prime reasons for visiting our parks. In most instances, people and wildlife can coexist with little threat. However, the nearness of wildlife and visitors can often cause problems, particularly when visitors' actions cause an animal to alter its normal foraging behavior in response to handouts of human food or garbage. Animals that become dependent on human food can and do present a threat to visitor safety and health, and they can also pose a serious threat to a park's physical, natural, and cultural resources. Such nuisance situations can also arise from escaped domestic and feral animals.

Frequently, well-meaning park visitors fail to recognize the causes, symptoms, or results of nuisance animals. Many potentially harmful interactions occur because visitors either deliberately fail to leave wildlife alone, or unwittingly contribute to the problem by failing to secure their camping or picnicking sites. This guideline is intended to provide staff with information on how to recognize and control nuisance animals, particularly in areas of high visitor use. It includes information on visitor education, methods of control, and sources for additional assistance in the identification and control of nuisance animals. Any actions undertaken to control or remove nuisance animals in North Carolina's State Parks System will be in accordance with these guidelines and the division's Law Enforcement Guidelines.

Sincerely,

Philip K. McKnelly
Director

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2.0 INTRODUCTION AND POLICY STATEMENT

These guidelines cover all decisions that actively or passively influence the control of individual native animals by park staff and are intended to provide a process for implementing practical solutions to animal management problems. It is the policy of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation to perpetuate native animal populations, and the processes that control them, as part of the natural ecosystems protected by the state parks system. The objective in managing native species is to allow these animals to live and behave naturally while also providing for safe visitor use. Ideally, human influence will be minimized, and interactions with wildlife, if they occur, will have little or no effect on the animal.

However, situations can arise in which an animal's behavior may constitute a significant threat to park visitors, facilities, or cultural and natural resources. Such "nuisance" animals usually occur only as individuals in areas where the animal's habitat overlaps that of visitor use areas (i.e., in campgrounds, trails, or other use areas), or under predictable conditions (i.e., when sick, injured, unexpectedly encountered, or protecting young). In some cases, such as in visitor use areas, park staff may need only to alter visitor use patterns or move the animal. In other cases, such as back country areas, where human-animal conflicts are probable and/or unavoidable, staff and visitors should be cautioned and informed about known risks and threats. Situations involving visitor injury, or a sick or dangerous animal, can justify the animal's permanent removal.

Although park staff may be quite knowledgeable about animals and their behavior, many park visitors are naive about the biology and opportunistic behavior of most animal species. Many nuisance animals are a consequence of conditioned behaviors that are the direct result of improperly stored food, poor camping hygiene, improper trash disposal, or the deliberate feeding of animals. These unnatural food sources inevitably lead to negative interactions; unfortunately, it is usually the animal that suffers the worst consequences. The primary goal of this guideline is to control nuisance animals by avoiding or preventing negative interactions. The prevention of nuisance cases requires that park staff anticipate sites with a high potential for human-wildlife encounters and then establish effective protocols.

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3.0 **DEFINITIONS**

Nuisance Animals: Individual animals whose actions create special management problems, usually on a repetitive basis. Examples of animal species from which nuisance cases may arise include raccoons, skunks, beavers, feral hogs, bears, poisonous snakes, and alligators.

Native Animal Species: Those animal species that occur, have occurred, or may occur in a park only as a result of natural processes.

Feral Animal Species: Those animal species that normally occur as domesticated species but have escaped captivity and are adapted to living in the wild. No feral animal will be considered native, regardless of the length of time of its presence. Common examples include dogs, cats, pigs, and goats.

Population: A group of individuals of one species that occurs in a distinct portion of the species' natural range. Populations interbreed and have a common set of genetic characteristics.

Unnatural Concentrations: Populations of animals that are greater than those that would be sustained if it were not for human influences or human-induced behavior patterns.

Control: Reduction of a population. Options range from behavior control, to relocation, to elimination. The level of control will be dependant on management capabilities, objectives, and the severity of the problem.

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4.0 CHARACTERISTICS OF NUISANCE ANIMALS

Since many species can become tolerant of humans, it is vital that park staff understand a particular animal's behavior before classifying it as a nuisance. Most wild animals will avoid humans and will not frequent developed areas on a regular basis. Nuisance animals, on the other hand, will deliberately seek out developed areas and will generally exhibit bold, sometimes aggressive behavior that is not typical for the species. However, animals in the wild may send conflicting signals, and park staff should be alert to certain indicators. Care must be taken to insure that transients, animals searching for mates, or other non-threatening resident wildlife are not mistaken for nuisance animals. Factors that park staff must consider when determining if an animal is a nuisance are **habituation, conditioning**, and whether the species is **native or feral**.

4.1 Habituation

Habituation is the capability that all animals possess in varying degrees to become accustomed to routine aspects of their environments. If areas of high human use overlap with an animal's natural range or territory, then the presence of people may become a routine aspect of that animal's environment. Most animal species have home ranges or territories to which they show great fidelity, even in the presence of humans. Therefore, in order to continue using the habitat, the animal must tolerate, or become habituated to, humans. Such animals will continue to forage and move naturally in visitor use areas and, in most cases, will not become nuisance animals. However, habituation may lead to nuisance if the animal is repeatedly tempted to feed on human food or trash. Common examples of habituated, non-nuisance animals include deer that graze along road shoulders, birds that continue to nest in visitor use areas, and animals that continue to move through the area en route to established territories or feeding areas.

4.2 Conditioning

Conditioning is a animal's ability to learn and form associations between the presence of people and the likelihood that food will be available. Strongly conditioned animals almost always occur in areas of high human use, such as campgrounds, trail heads, picnic areas, etc. This behavior can be taught to offspring and is common among many feral and native species. Raccoons, bear, and other mammals can be particularly adept at learning such behavior. Conditioned animals can become quite bold around humans, and will frequent trash cans, appear at campsites around meal times, raid picnic areas and camping areas, beg for food, and readily accept handouts. It is

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important to realize that although both habituation and conditioning can cause increased human-animal encounters, strongly-conditioned animals are usually of greater concern. Animals that have become strongly conditioned to human presence, food, or garbage are typically more visible than non-conditioned animals, and are generally said to have "lost their fear" of humans. What was originally a simple attraction to human food may quickly degenerate into a dependence on that food, and attempts

to control or scare these animals away will frequently fail. Because of their boldness around humans and an increasing reliance on human food, these strongly conditioned animals can pose a significant threat to visitors. Animals conditioned to humans and that are likely to become nuisance animals may be characterized by the following behaviors:

1. They may visit the same area repeatedly and may alter their normal, nocturnal habits to coincide with the daytime activities of visitors.
2. They may continually develop skills to outwit new systems designed to keep them out of food containers, trash cans, etc.
3. They may begin to feed almost exclusively on human food or garbage at high use areas.
4. They may learn to associate tents, garbage bags, coolers, and any container-like object with food, resulting in the animals entering cars, tents, etc., in search of food.
5. They may become extremely aggressive and bold over time, and may be unfazed by harassment tactics such as pan banging, shouting, thrown objects, etc., that generally scare away other animals.

4.3 Native vs. Feral Species

Although the designation of any native species as a nuisance animal will be subject to the criteria contained in this guideline, all escaped, domestic, or feral species that appear on park property will, by virtue of their status as non-native animals, be automatically designated as nuisance animals. Because many feral species lack significant natural predators, their presence can have dire, long-lived competitive affects on native species. The Division's Law Enforcement Guidelines outline the policy and protocol for dealing with free-roaming, escaped, and abandoned domestic animals, as well as feral animals (see Appendix I). Where feasible, park staff should take appropriate measures to permanently remove any feral species.

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5.0 CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH AN ANIMAL MAY BE DECLARED A NUISANCE

An animal may be declared a nuisance if any one of the following conditions is documented:

1. The threat of physical injury or disease transmission to humans exists due to persistently abnormal or conditioned animal behavior, especially in public use areas. An example is the continual presence of a panhandling animal in a campground or picnic area.
2. Unacceptable impacts occur to high quality natural areas, rare species, or other sensitive natural or cultural resources. Examples may include the effects of native species, such as raccoon predation on sea turtle nests, as well as the effects of feral species, including wallowing, over-grazing, or predation by pigs, dogs, cats, goats, etc.
3. Unacceptable damage occurs to park facilities or neighboring public or private property. Examples include flooding damage from beaver activity, crop losses by bears or deer, or damage to facilities by foraging or nesting animals, such as squirrels, birds, or raccoons.
4. An injured, diseased, rabid, or otherwise unpredictable animal is deemed to present an immediate threat to personal safety and/or health. Examples include animals struck by motor vehicles, obviously sick or diseased animals, or animals that mount unprovoked attacks. As noted in the division's Law Enforcement Guidelines, such animals may be killed on the spot at the discretion of the field staff.
5. Any feral or escaped domestic animal takes up residence on the park.

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6.0 NUISANCE ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

In the absence of an immediate threat to human health and safety, then to the greatest extent possible, park staff will refrain from artificially managing native species populations. Natural processes will be relied on as the primary forces affecting native species populations. An emphasis will also be placed on identifying and controlling human behaviors that contribute to nuisance situations. Nuisance animals may be controlled by artificial means if the human influences causing the problem cannot be controlled.

6.1 Documentation

It is essential that problems with nuisance animals be well documented. The declaration of a nuisance situation must be supported by evidence that is measurable, human-caused, and shown to have occurred repeatedly. The permanent removal of any nuisance animal will not be taken without a clear record of the problem. Careful documentation is essential, as this information will form the basis for the severity and extent of the management program. Field staff should keep records of all damage caused by problem animals, and any incident involving visitors should be documented with a Case Incident Report (Form PR-63).

Once a nuisance problem has been documented, identifying a practical management option is probably the most important step toward eliminating the problem. **The division's credibility can be seriously affected by improper responses to nuisance situations, so it is vital that park staff make careful, informed decisions regarding the prevention and control of nuisance animals.** In many cases, it may prove useful to employ a combination of options.

6.2 Modification of Human Behavior and Influence

Because nuisance animals are frequently a consequence of human behavior and actions, division staff should, whenever possible, work to resolve nuisance animal problems by managing human behavior rather than by directly controlling the animals themselves. Emphasis should be placed on the following issues when working to mitigate human effects on native animals:

6.2.1 Visitor Education

Park staff should seek first to reduce or eliminate conflicts by encouraging the voluntary cooperation of park visitors. Public education is probably the single most important method that can be used to warn visitors against behavior that encourages nuisance animals. Visitors must be warned that animals begging for food and eating garbage are not part of the natural environment,

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and they must be reminded of the potential for serious injury if they fail to keep a safe distance from wild animals. Education strategies should include brochures, interpretation and education programs, information signs, warning signs, personal contact, and other methods as necessary to address specific situations. Generic warnings notifying visitors to avoid all wild animals are appropriate. However, visitors may develop a heightened sense of awareness and responsibility if information is specifically tailored to address a particular park's issues or species.

Warnings should be prominently posted at all visitor use areas that may be prone to scavenging animals, such as trail heads, picnic areas, campgrounds, washhouses, etc. **It is important that all warnings be permanently mounted, clearly visible, easy to read, and bluntly worded.** Examples of warnings used by the National Park Service are included in Appendix II; park staff should develop park-specific notices and post them accordingly. An easy, highly visible method is to staple warnings printed on brightly-colored, laminated, heavy card stock to picnic tables in camping and picnic areas. Useful information that should be included in interpretive programs and warning signs includes:

- **Never** feed animals or leave food out for them. Feeding animals conditions them to expect handouts, and may lead to a confrontation and serious injury if food is withheld.
- Every park visitor has a responsibility to ensure that the park's wild animals remain wild. The park's wild animals thank you for not enticing them with unnatural foods.
- Never store food or garbage inside tents or leave it in plain sight, even inside a closed vehicle. Animals can learn to associate any box-shaped item, such as picnic baskets or coolers, with food.

6.2.2 Sanitation and Garbage Disposal

Once animals are strongly conditioned to human food and garbage, reversing their behavior can be extremely difficult. This is especially true if the animal has altered normally nocturnal behavior to coincide with the daytime use of an area. **The presence of human food and garbage in visitor use areas has been widely documented as the primary factor initiating behavioral changes that result in nuisance animals.** Extensive research by the National Park Service has concluded that keeping visitor use areas free of unsecured food and garbage is a proven method for reducing or eliminating nuisance animals.

Visitors must be reminded that improperly stored food or garbage can attract potentially dangerous animals. Regardless of the type of container that is used, it is essential that proper garbage storage

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be coupled with regular removals, particularly in areas of high vulnerability. Areas with high vulnerability to scavenging

animals, such as campgrounds or picnic areas, should have trash removed **daily**. Trash containers must **not** be allowed to become overfilled or left holding garbage overnight, and visitors must be warned against throwing garbage on the ground, into fire pits, or leaving any trash or food unsecured. All garbage must be placed in garbage containers or stored where it is inaccessible to animals. Coolers should never be considered to be animal-proof. When left unattended, coolers must be stored in vehicles, preferably out of sight.

Many animal species possess the dexterity, tenacity, or simple strength to open or destroy virtually any conventional trash can. Conventional trash cans, no matter how carefully rigged, still frequently fail to deter scavenging animals, usually because the animals outwit the designer or, more often, because visitors fail to properly secure the lid. Also, most conventional garbage containers have unattached lids that can be easily bent or dented. Dented lids are difficult for humans to close, but easy for animals to open. Ideally, all outdoor garbage and recycling containers should be physically inaccessible to animals, and should be self-closing. In the absence of animal-resistant trash cans, all trash containers should have lids that fit tightly. Trash cans without secure lids should never be used.

Information on animal-resistant trash containers is included in Appendix III. Regardless of the type of container that is used, several steps can be taken to minimize problems:

- All containers should be made of galvanized steel and should have drainage holes at the bottom. Liquids left standing in containers typically develop strong odors that attract animals. Always use removable plastic liners.
- Lids should be weather-tight and self-closing/latching. Intricate latch systems should be avoided. They will deter animals, but they will also likely deter visitors from properly closing them.
- Conventional trash cans can be improved with the addition of simple lid-holding systems constructed from shock cords, cable, rope, etc. Placing a brick or large rock on the lid may also prove effective.
- If mailbox-type trash cans are use, the doors should open out, not in.

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- Reduce the number of trash containers by clustering them in central locations, particularly in picnic areas and campgrounds. Small dumpsters may prove useful in campgrounds, since they will largely eliminate the need for individual containers.
- Containers should be stabilized with racks, restraining posts, stand-pipes, chains, or tie-down cables.

6.2.3 Food Storage

All visitors must be reminded to secure their campsites or picnic areas so that animals are not attracted by human food. Storage in a closed vehicle is preferred. Ideally, campsites in back country areas should be located so that backpackers are able to bag and suspend their food from trees or some other hoist system. If the park has remote areas that are particularly susceptible to

human-animal encounters, then it is imperative that campers have a way to secure their food and cooking gear. If such facilities are not provided, then it is a certainty that nuisance situations will occur and will steadily worsen. The installation of metal or fiberglass food lockers such as those used by the National Park Service is strongly recommended for such sites (see Appendix III for information).

General visitor education on proper food storage should stress the following points:

- When not being used, **all** food, cooking gear, and cleaning supplies must be securely stored inside a vehicle. Coolers should **never** be stored outside.
- **Never** store food, cooking gear, cleaning supplies, or personal toiletry items such as toothpaste, chap stick, deodorant, etc. inside tents. This only invites animals into the tent.
- Keep a clean campsite. **Never** leave food, cooking gear, or cleaning supplies unattended.
- **Never** leave food out for animals.

6.2.4 Facilities Planning and Protection

An analysis of potential nuisance situations should be made **prior** to the construction of any park facilities. This is particularly important for picnic areas, trail heads, campgrounds, and trails. Field and design staff should consult with natural resource management staff early in the design phase to ensure that potential problems can be avoided or mitigated. Pre-construction surveys would include surveys for poisonous snake dens or birthing rookeries; resident populations

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of species such as raccoons or skunks that are particularly susceptible to human-induced behavioral changes; or areas of undisturbed, high quality habitat that can be expected to serve as a home territory for such species.

Facilities should be constructed to minimize or avoid problems, and should be coupled from the beginning with a program to minimize the presence of human food and garbage. This should include plans for animal-resistant trash containers. Measures to make structures less susceptible to habitation by wild animals include the following:

- Cover potential entrances such as chimney caps, loose shingles, and openings in attics, roofs and eaves. Susceptible structures can be checked for animal activity by sprinkling plaster of Paris and then checking for tracks.
- Trim overhanging branches away from all structures that provide potential home sites or food sources.
- Keep all vent covers in good repair and immediately repair any holes that could provide access.
- Eaves should be kept clean and potential nest sites blocked through the use of aviary wire or some other non-toxic material.

6.3 NON-LETHAL CONTROL OF NUISANCE ANIMALS

Visitor education is intended primarily to prevent the appearance of nuisance animals and should work well in areas that do not yet have resident nuisance animals. However, if an area already has nuisance animals, then visitor education will likely have to be combined with more aggressive methods. The effective control of strongly conditioned animals that are engaging in destructive or threatening behavior will likely require park staff to actively intervene and disrupt the animal's behavior. This can be accomplished through a combination of methods, primarily the following:

6.3.1 Harassment

In some cases aggressive harassment, such as loud noises, bright lights, non-toxic chemicals, etc. can deter a nuisance animal from a developed area. However, unless these tactics are administered consistently and indefinitely, they probably do relatively little to deter animals that are strongly conditioned to humans or are active in developed areas during the day. Harassment

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must be continual, concentrated, and caustic in order to be effective. Remember, you are attempting to convince animals to abandon food sources or homes upon which they have become dependent; therefore, you must become the animal's worst neighbor. Many times, the most effective harassment techniques will need to be fairly species-specific, and park staff should consult with knowledgeable biologists prior to initiating such activity. Bright lights, for instance, will frequently cause animals that have taken up residence in buildings to simply retreat farther into the building. Useful references regarding species specific issues appear in Appendix IV.

Although a certain amount of shouting, pan banging, etc. is to be expected, and perhaps encouraged, from visitors who repeatedly encounter animals in their camp or picnic sites, park visitors should not be encouraged to employ techniques that can result in physical harm to the animal, as this can quickly degenerate into unnecessary harassment (or worse) of the park's wildlife. If harassment is initiated, it will be vitally important to link it with measures to permanently improve food and garbage storage in the affected area(s). Otherwise, it is highly unlikely that the situation will be changed in the long run.

6.3.2 Trapping and Relocation

Feral Species

If nuisance animal problems cannot be resolved through the methods listed above, then park staff should consider trapping and, if appropriate, relocation. For situations involving domestic animals, park staff will, when possible, notify park neighbors and allow them to remove their animals. If these animals remain on the loose and are deemed to constitute a threat to park wildlife or visitors, then they should be captured and held until claimed by their owners. As noted in Section 4.3, feral animals can be dealt with as nuisance animals under the division's Law Enforcement Guidelines. Such operations should be undertaken in cooperation with a local animal control agency, humane society, or other appropriate organization. Unless there are compelling reasons involving visitor health and safety or park resource protection, the preferred method for handling all feral animals will be to trap them and turn them over to the local animal control office. Otherwise, the destruction of any feral animal should occur only as a last resort.

Native Species

The relocation of nuisance native animals must be considered prior to proceeding to permanent removal, but park staff must also be aware that wildlife regulations regarding animal-borne diseases may prohibit the relocation of certain species, such as raccoons. Prior to trapping,

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Wildlife Resources Commission staff must be consulted for technical guidance and regulatory information regarding the

trapping and relocation of any nuisance animal.

Trapping and relocation can be extremely stressful on small animals. If park staff lack sufficient trapping experience, then assistance should be requested from agencies such as the local animal control office, the local humane society, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, wildlife rehabilitation centers, aquariums, zoos, and wildlife adoption organizations.

Because improper relocations may inadvertently place an animal at greater risk than that posed by its presence in the visitor use area, prior consultation with knowledgeable biologists is vital. Relocation distances and timing may be critical to an animal's survival, particularly for species with limited home ranges and den sites, such as venomous snakes. When trapping, the following points must be observed:

- Prior to trapping and relocating animals, park staff must check with the NC Wildlife Resources Commission regarding permits, licenses, or restrictions.
- Live traps are required. Care must be taken to ensure that only the target animal is trapped.
- Traps should be placed in isolated locations that are the least observable by the public. All traps should be set at night.
- All traps are to be checked at daylight, with no more than a 24 hour lapse between inspections. Trapped animals are to be moved to shaded and secure areas away from visitors to await relocation.

6.3.3 Closure of Areas

In the event that warnings, visitor education, and relocation fail to resolve a nuisance situation, then the closure of areas to human entry may be employed where human activity is contributing to the problem. In those instances, the public should be notified via signs explaining the situation. Closures must be coordinated with the resource management program and must be supported by documentation. They should be as small as possible and should be restricted only to the season of impact. All closures must be combined with a program to remove or control any human-induced factors leading to nuisance animals and must be preceded by a press release explaining the problem and the reasons for undertaking the action.

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6.4 LETHAL CONTROL OF NUISANCE ANIMALS

Nuisance animals may be permanently removed in limited situations as a consequence of serious conflicts with visitor safety, natural or cultural resource protection, or park facilities and operations. As noted in the Law Enforcement Guidelines, any animal, native or exotic, that presents a serious and imminent threat to employee or visitor safety may be destroyed at the discretion of field staff. Animals that are sick or injured may also be destroyed on the spot by park staff in accordance with the division's Law Enforcement Guidelines. Such actions are to be documented through a PR-63.

However, destroying any otherwise healthy native or feral animal that has been designated as a nuisance will be a measure of

last resort and, except in cases of actual injury or imminent threat to personal safety, will be employed **only** after all other efforts at control have failed. In those cases where staff can document a compelling need for permanent removal(s), the Park Superintendent will route a request and plan of action through the District Superintendent to the Superintendent of State Parks and the Chief of Planning and Natural Resources. The negative effects of the nuisance animal(s) must be documented and must be measurable, repeated, and known to be human-caused before permanent removal can be justified. Staff must also document the actions taken to date, the results, and the method(s) by which the park proposes to address the problem for both the short and long term. The following points must be observed:

- Lethal methods will be limited to injection, carbon dioxide poisoning, or shooting, to be determined and administered only after consultation with appropriate wildlife staff, local veterinarians, or other authorities. All lethal removals must occur humanely. Unless the animal presents an imminent threat to personal safety, removal must occur completely out of the sight and sound of visitors. See Appendix V for additional information.
- Removal will focus on individuals, not entire populations.
- Destroying any animal may require a license, a special permit, or other notification and documentation from local, state, or federal authorities.
- Removals will be limited to common species. Rare species will **not** be subject to removal under this guideline.

6.5 PUBLIC RELATIONS ISSUES

In most cases, destroying a nuisance animal will be very displeasing to the public, since park

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visitors generally feel great sympathy toward all park wildlife and are frequently unaware that they may have played a role in causing the animal's death. The most sensitive problem will probably be the management of the park's and division's response to the public. If public response becomes an issue, then park staff should be prepared to educate concerned citizens about the causes of the problem, the options, and the non-lethal actions that were taken. If a decision is made to remove animals, then the Park Superintendent should work closely with resource management staff, interpretation and education staff, and the division's Public Information Officer to develop appropriate strategies for addressing public reaction.

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7.0 MONITORING AND FUTURE CONTROL

Depending on the severity of the situation, nuisance animal management can require the development of a long term program. Regardless of the level of intervention, it will be imperative that park staff monitor the area(s) and species that have been affected and to document the results of the intervention. Frequently, nuisance animal situations will require repeated intervention until all of the most highly-conditioned animals have been removed; therefore, staff must be prepared for the potential of a long term management plan and visitor education program.

Also, since nuisance animals are almost inevitably associated with human-induced causes, the importance of identifying and addressing those causes cannot be overstated. Most likely, this will involve greater attention being given to visitor education regarding food and garbage storage and disposal. It must be stressed to all park staff that animal control measures undertaken in the absence of steps intended to decrease animals' access to food and garbage will likely fail, even in the short-term.

As with the justification for the initiation of a management program, the analysis of its success will depend on thorough documentation. Park staff must maintain a database of incidents involving visitors and animals; the criteria for successful control must also be identified as part of the management program. These criteria should be easily measured and can include parameters such as numbers of incidents, severity of incidents, installation of animal resistant trash/food storage systems, visitor education programs, posted warnings, etc. It will be the responsibility of the park superintendent to ensure that all control programs are adequately monitored and documented.

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8.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8.1 Superintendent of State Parks

The Superintendent of State Parks is responsible for administration of the Nuisance Animal Management Guidelines.

8.2 District Superintendent

The district superintendent will review all park-specific control plans and will approve the allocation of district personnel to assist in the implementation of any park's control plan.

8.3 Park Superintendent

The Park Superintendent is responsible for developing programs that will, to the greatest extent possible, prevent the occurrence of nuisance animals in the park. In the event of a documented nuisance situation, the superintendent will be responsible for the establishment of control programs. The development of a plan will be undertaken with consultation from the Resource Management Program, the District I&E Specialist, and other knowledgeable personnel as appropriate.

8.4 Resource Management Program

The Resource Management Program's staff will be available to provide technical assistance in the prevention and assessment of nuisance animals. They will also be available to assist in the preparation of control plans. The head of the Resource Management Program shares with the Park Superintendent and the District Superintendent the responsibility for final approval of all control plans.

8.5 Public Information Officer

With the exception of animals that are destroyed on the spot in accordance with the division's Law Enforcement Guidelines, the permanent removal of any nuisance animal will be accompanied by the preparation of information informing the public about the need for the control program. Special attention will be given to identifying the causes of the problem and describing the steps that have been taken.

Appendix I

Operations Policy for the Management and Control of Injured, Dangerous, and Feral Animals

The presence of feral animals and diseased wildlife within a park can pose a real threat to park visitors and employees, as well

as to the park's natural resources. This policy is issued to provide each park employee with guidance concerning the proper methods for resolving these problems when they develop.

Definitions:

Injured Animal: An animal, either wildlife or domesticated, that is determined to be in poor health due to an infectious disease, the observation of obviously serious injuries, or severe malnutrition.

Feral Animal: A domesticated animal, such as dogs, cats, hogs, cows, or horses, that have been abandoned in or near the park or that have otherwise reverted to a wild state. An animal will not be classified as "feral" until there are repeated, documented incidents, similar in nature involving the same animal(s) and ownership cannot be established in the local area.

Dangerous Animal: A wild or domestic animal, that poses an obvious threat to park visitors, park employees, or resident wildlife through its actions, or as a result of its poor health.

All park employees during their normal duties should be aware of any unusual activities involving resident wildlife or domestic animals. If the observed activities indicate to the employee an abnormal situation, these observations should be brought to the attention of the park superintendent. If, in the superintendent's opinion, a report or series of reports indicates that a problem is emerging, he/she should initiate a preliminary investigation to determine the extent and character of the problem.

1. If it is determined that the problem involves resident wildlife, the park superintendent should initially document the investigation and summarize the findings. He/she will request, through the District Superintendent, the assistance of other division personnel or he/she may elect to work directly with the local wildlife officer. Capture of the animal will be the preferred method of resolution; however, if destruction of the animal is recommended by the wildlife officer as the most humane method, the animal's destruction will be done by that officer or under his/her supervision.

2. If the problem involves domestic animals, whether they be feral, injured, dangerous, or a simple case of local animals running free in the park, the park superintendent will attempt to identify the animals' owner(s) by contacting neighboring landowners. Every effort will be made to locate the animals' owner(s) and allow them to remove their animals. If unsuccessful, he/she will contact the local animal control officials or humane society for assistance in capturing and

Appendix I (continued)

removing the animals. If these agencies are unwilling or unable to assist the park staff in removing the animals, the park superintendent will attempt to set live traps or otherwise apprehend the animals. If successful, the captured animals will be delivered to the appropriate animal control facility or Humane Society shelter. The capture attempts will be reported on the Case Incident Report (PR-63), which will be used to document the resolution of the problem, or if unsuccessful, used to justify further action.

Capture attempts will not be done in any manner that may place the safety of any park employee in jeopardy. If the animals are too large to be safely trapped, too wild or wary, or appear too dangerous to be caught, the park superintendent will request permission from the district superintendent to destroy the animal(s). Part of this request will be the PR-63 documenting all previous attempts to resolve the problem. If the district superintendent concurs with the recommendation, a plan of action will be recommended by the park superintendent and reviewed in detail with the district superintendent. This plan of action will

include coordination with the local animal control agency or Humane Society, if possible.

Any wild animal that has been so severely injured that rescue or rehabilitative efforts would be obviously futile and prolong the animal's suffering may be destroyed immediately. Such incidents must be documented on a Case Incident Report.

If any animal, wild or domestic, presents a serious and imminent threat to the safety of an employee or visitor, such dangerous animals may be immediately destroyed, or otherwise rendered harmless. This will be done immediately if the employee at the scene has such means available and can do so without endangering persons or property; the authorization of the district superintendent is not required in this situation. Likewise, the district superintendent's authorization is not required to destroy or render harmless a feral animal that is in the act of chasing, or has caught wildlife in the park. This condition applies only to feral animals that have been proven to meet all of the criteria for this classification as defined above. A Case Incident Report will document the destruction of any animal and the circumstances that dictated the action. **The destruction of wildlife or other animals, when necessary, will be done discreetly and as humanely as possible. It will not be done in the presence of park visitors or park neighbors unless the animal represents an imminent threat to life or limb.** If it is known or suspected that a park visitor or neighbor may have witnessed the animal's death, the park superintendent will immediately notify the district superintendent.

ALL EMPLOYEES ARE REMINDED THAT EXTREME CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO ASSURE THAT FIREARM PROJECTILES WILL NOT ENDANGER PARK VISITORS OR NEIGHBORS AND WILL LAND IN A SAFE AREA WHEN ANIMALS ARE DESTROYED.